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Present Wants of the Nation.

PACIFICATION—RESUMPTION OF SPECIE PAYMENTS—
THE SILVER DOLLAR—REFORM OF THE
CIVIL SERVICE—EDUCATION OF THE
PEOPLE—EXEMPTION FROM
LAND GRANTS.

ADDRESS OF

HON. JAMES MONROE,

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SPEECH

OF

HON. JAMES MONROE.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN: My subject is, "Present Wants of the Nation." I shall not attempt to speak of all our national wants, but only of such as are now most obvious, gravest and most imperative. Each of these might well occupy the hour. To group several of them in rapid review, while it will afford no opportunity for exhaustive treatment, will give some idea of our political issues as a whole, and will, perhaps, at the same time, be sufficiently suggestive to enable each mind to fill out for itself the details of fact and argument which must be left unspoken here. I welcome, and you will welcome, such an occasion. In my judgment, it is a good time for every citizen, and especially every citizen in public life, to utter his opinions with entire frankness, and, if possible, with entire freedom from party bias. There is a present demand for speech which, while it is courteous and considerate, shall be frank and impartial. "He serves his party best who serves his country best," is a maxim already much praised. Let us hope that it will soon be generally practiced.

1. The first great want of the Nation is final and permanent peace—quiet, rest, from the agitation of those irritating questions which led to, or grew out of the war.

The Nation wants this as the very basis of all future growth and prosperity. Business waits for it, that its multiplied industries may revive in all the land. Education needs it, that it may push its conquests into new provinces. Civilization requires it, that its varied blessings of culture, progress, enlightenment, may

visit every neighborhood. Christianity wants it, that its message of love may be carried to every house. The great heart of the whole people longs for it. All human interests demand that the land should have this great rest. We want always and everywhere peace, good-will, patriotism, national feeling, friendly recognition, perfect freedom of inter-communication, brotherly competition in all useful activities, and deliverance from all narrow jealousies.

But this great end can be secured only on a basis of justice—of security in the enjoyment of rights. Nothing short of this can give the country lasting peace. After all, the greatest attribute of nations is justice. If not the most brilliant and showy, it is the most necessary and useful, and in it is the hiding of the Nation's power. Certain great doctrines, which were established by the war and the will of the people, have been embodied in the new amendments to the Constitution. These doctrines are a common liberty, a common citizenship, and a common suffrage for all the people. These are the shield which the Nation holds out over the heads of those otherwise unprotected. Any policy which would abrogate or cripple or limit the full and fair application of these doctrines, cannot give rest to the Nation. Were it supposable that such a policy would conciliate the South, it would not conciliate the North; and it must not be forgotten that there is a North, and that it, too, must be conciliated. For this purpose nothing is wanting but the maintenance of the Constitution and the execution of the laws.

But let any portion of the people be deprived of these, through the remissness of existing political organizations, and then there will be nothing left to the freemen of the North but to begin again the discussion of elementary principles, and to build up, persistently and perhaps laboriously, a constitutional party of liberty, which shall, at length, take possession of the government, and, by establishing justice, insure domestic tranquility. Among a free people, nothing is settled until it is settled right. There must be protection for life, liberty, home, and all legal rights; the humblest cabin must be as sacred from intrusion as the palace; every American—even the poorest and the blackest—must feel that every part of the land is his for every lawful and honorable purpose—that he is free to follow any honest calling anywhere between the lakes and the gulf; there must be an absolute sense of security for the industrious and law-abiding man, and the sense of danger and fear of punishment must be reserved for the law-breaker;—all these mighty evidences of righteous administration and well-ordered freedom must exist from ocean to ocean, before Justice can lead in her white-robed daughter, Peace, to possess the land.

The desired end, therefore, is the general pacification of the country, through the faithful and impartial execution of the laws. As to the best method of securing this end, great differences of opinion, of course, exist. Just now the policy of the President is the subject of general discussion. Whatever any of us may have thought of his policy at the outset, it is plain to me that the right course for us now to pursue is to aid him in making it a success. For the sake of entire frankness, I will state that it was not, in all its parts, a policy which I could have recommended. To me it would have seemed the more obvious and natural course that the President, upon his inauguration, should have paid some attention to the question who had

been elected Governors of Louisiana and South Carolina under the laws thereof. Our Chief Executive, in the discharge of his constitutional duties, must often correspond with the Governors of States, and he was particularly liable to be called upon to do this in the case of these States. Under such circumstances a thorough and earnest effort, with the aid of his Attorney-General and other constitutional advisers, to ascertain who were the legal Governors of those States, would seem to have been proper and commendable. Indeed, so natural was this course, and so likely to be pursued by any commission of inquiry, that our excellent Secretary of State thought it necessary to instruct the Commission selected to visit New Orleans against any examination into the facts of the election recently held in Louisiana. Having ascertained who were lawful Governors of the disputed States, the President might with safety have announced his conclusions, whether they were in favor of Packard or Nichols—Chamberlain or Hampton. There is great satisfaction in such cases in arriving at the truth, and the people are much disposed to sustain a government which strives, without fear or favor, to accomplish that result. The President might have continued to recognize, to correspond with, as occasion should require, and to lend his powerful moral support to those whom he had adjudged to be the rightful claimants, so long as they could maintain themselves in the office of Governor, or so long as they might be, in fact, Governors. Certainly all this would have been strictly within the limits of his legitimate authority; and the doing of these constitutional acts would not have placed him under the necessity of doing other acts which, in his honest judgment, might be unconstitutional. He would not be compelled, because he believed a certain man to be Governor, and had recognized him as such, to resort to the unconstitutional use of force to sustain him in his place. It would be

still quite in his power to stop at the line drawn by official duty—the obligations of his official oath. If, then, the man recognized by the President as rightful Governor had been able to sustain himself with the people of his State, there would have been a very strong presumption that the right thing had been done. There would hardly have been found a man to question his title. But had the recognized official fallen from his place, it would then have been evident that his fall was due solely to his want of strength at home. He could not have claimed that he had failed because he had been compelled to encounter the moral weight of the administration in addition to the power of his political opponents. In that case, our honored President would not have left it in the power of any one to say that his influence, or that of his Commissioners, had been directly or indirectly exerted against the cause which, in his heart, he believed to be the just one.

But this question is no longer in issue. It is now too late to aid the President in forming a policy upon this subject. No one has ever proposed to make an attempt to restore Packard or Chamberlain. Whatever we may think of the President's policy, it has been honestly, deliberately and courageously chosen, and it will be persisted in to the end. That notch in the ratchet wheel is passed. We heard the click of its movement. We can help make future history, but we cannot unmake past history. The question is not what the policy of the President should be, but what is our duty in connection with it, now that it has been adopted. To me the answer is plain. We must do that which, under existing circumstances, is most conducive to the general welfare. We must cheerfully sacrifice personal preference—the pride of opinion—upon the altar of the common good. We must do our best to make the new policy a success. To this end patriotic men of all parties must unite. Had we any reason to be-

lieve that President Hayes was guided by unhallowed ambition, or by any selfish motive, we might well think it dangerous to sustain him, and think it our duty to rebuke the spirit by which he was governed. But we know that such is not his character. Having faith in his honesty of purpose, we must encourage him, strengthen his hands, and co-operate with him. We are not obliged to say to him, that these are the measures which we would have preferred, but we can say to him, that, as these measures have been inaugurated, and we have confidence in the patriotism, integrity and firmness of the man who did it, we will exert ourselves to make them a blessing to the country. I see no possible advantage in any course that would weaken or embarrass him or embroil the North in angry discussion. We can not recover the past, and we might sacrifice the future. I can not think that many of our citizens will allow themselves to be so repelled by regrets for the past as to neglect the noble opportunities that remain. For one, in spite of some recent unhappy events in the South, and of some acts which cannot be too severely characterized, I am still hopeful of a great success for the policy of conciliation. I know that there are statesmen in the South, of broad views and national feeling, who would gladly meet us half way in the establishment of such a policy. There is ground for hope that, under the leadership of such men, and with, due encouragement from the administration, a new Southern party may be organized which shall be animated by a liberal and patriotic spirit. The division of the old dominant class in the South into two parties, both inviting the aid of the colored voters, would prepare the way for better feeling between the races, and would be full of promise for the whole country. The end which we all desire to secure is the maintenance of the great safeguards of liberty, and through this the peace and prosperity of the nation. Any measures which ac-

complish this end, and are not contrary to the Constitution nor repugnant to sound morality, will finally be satisfactory to all parties. Measures of conciliation and good feeling are, of course, preferable to those of a different kind whenever they can be successfully employed, for they bring a success not only more complete in itself, but less likely to be followed by a dangerous reaction. If President Hayes should not succeed with his policy, we can only regretfully say that an upright and patriotic ruler, desiring to heal the wounds of the country, undertook to accomplish great ends of statesmanship by an appeal to the patriotism, the brotherly feeling and the generous sympathies of the whole people, but, unfortunately, failed. But should he achieve success, as God grant he may, we shall all take pleasure in classing him and his ministers with those statesmen whom Tennyson describes as men:

“Who know the seasons, when to take
Occasion by the hand, and make
The bounds of freedom wider yet”—

men who cheerfully endure temporary criticism, and even loss of cherished friends, for the sake of securing enlargements to the Nation’s liberty, peace and prosperity.

2. The next great want of the Nation, after pacification, based upon the impartial execution of the laws, is the resumption of specie payments.

If we would have the country escape general bankruptcy, we must soon take measures to secure steadiness of value in our medium of exchange. If anything has been proved beyond possibility of cavil, it is, that the want of prosperity in business has been mainly due to the element of uncertainty—the risk, the hazard in it; and this element of uncertainty results from the almost daily fluctuations in the value of our currency. To this cause are due the rapid rise and fall in prices—the numerous failures—the general business depression—the gambling speculations of Wall street,

with its conspiracies, Black Fridays, and corners in stocks, greenbacks and gold—the strikes of operatives and the suffering of laborers—in fine, all the long catalogue of our business misfortunes. I have been informed by intelligent observers that it has repeatedly happened within the last few years that men, who desired to invest something in manufacturing industry, have studied the markets and questions of cost, and seeing, as they thought, a small margin of profit, have bought raw material and employed laborers, and, by and-by, when they have accumulated a large amount of manufactured goods, have, at some unlucky moment, been ruined by the shrinkage in value of the greenback dollar to the extent of one-half of one per cent. No doubt others have made more money than they expected to make, but, in both cases, the business was in an unhealthy condition. There is but little encouragement to prudent men to make investments where the risks are so great. Wise men will prefer to live upon little rather than to attempt to make more, with such danger of losing all. If I am certain of anything, it is that we shall never have sound and general prosperity again until the element of risk in our business transactions has been reduced to its minimum, by making coin the standard of value. What, then, are we to think of the statesmanship of those who propose to relieve the people of their embarrassments by increasing this element of uncertainty in business?

We must ask of our political parties, not only that they admit these facts, but that they act upon them—that they adopt such measures as will restore to us the sound currency which we need. They have commonly professed to be in favor of specie resumption, but, with some honorable exceptions, they have done too much in talking about and around this question, and not enough in devising and applying efficient practical remedies. Their platforms have contained many fine phrases, but they have

too often been obscure and general rather than clear and definite. If I mistake not, the country will not much longer tolerate this indecision and delay.

Among those who are earnestly in favor of resumption of specie payments, considerable difference of opinion naturally exists as to methods. I voted for the act which provides for resumption on the first of January, 1879, and have since steadily voted against its repeal. I did not support it with entire satisfaction, for although it was the best legislation which could be obtained at the time, yet it seemed to me to fail in making the necessary preparation, by means of suitable provisions, for the gradual appreciation of the value of the legal tenders. Without sufficient preparation of this kind, it was evident that it would be no easier to resume on the day fixed for that purpose than on the day when the act was passed. Indeed, some arrangement for the gradual approximation in value of the greenback dollar to the gold dollar, seems to me to be essential to any successful plan for resumption. There is no better method for securing this approximation than the now familiar one embodied in the English act of 1819—that of redeeming paper in gold, at rates steadily increasing through a considerable period of time. That we may understand what the working of this principle would be, as applied to our own financial system, let us suppose that Congress, on reassembling, should pass a law to the following effect: That on the 1st day of January, 1878, and during the half year following, the Secretary of the Treasury shall offer to redeem legal tender notes in gold, at what shall be the market rate on the first day of that year, which we will assume to be ninety-four cents; that on the 1st day of July, 1878, and for the six months thereafter, he shall redeem at the rate of ninety-five cents in gold to the dollar; that on the 1st of January, 1879, he shall commence redeeming at ninety-six cents to the dollar, and so on, with an

increase of one per cent for each half year, until the end of three years, when the greenback would reach the par with gold. Let a law like this be passed, and be faithfully carried out, and the following would be some of the noticeable results. In the first place, nearly all the advantages of specie resumption would be enjoyed at once. The value of our legal tenders would be almost absolutely fixed. The uncertainty which now attends business transactions would be, to a large extent, removed. Men could buy material, make contracts and incur debts, with a clear understanding of the extent of the obligations which they would be called upon to meet. It would make little difference to the business of the country how gradual the appreciation of the value of the greenback should be, so long as it was definitely fixed, and could be foreseen with certainty. But an appreciation of two per cent, per annum would be sufficiently gradual to remove all temptation to the hoarding of greenbacks, as this is much less than the interest which could be obtained for them when loaned upon the best security. Again, resumption under a system like this would, in no proper sense, be forced. The offering of legal tenders for redemption would be purely voluntary, and would take place only as the holders of them should prefer to have the coin. The process of redemption would go forward whenever, in the movements of business, greenbacks should accumulate in excess of the demand. But should this process be likely, at any time, to be carried too far, it would for that very reason be checked at once by the increased demand for greenbacks among the people. Thus, the system would, to a large extent, be self-adjusting. It is noticeable, also, that the danger to be guarded against, under the operations of such a law, would be that of inflation and not that of contraction. First of all, the law would increase the value of the whole volume of our currency two per cent, per annum; that is, it would give

us so much more money for each of the three years. For what is meant by more money? Certainly not more nominal values, but more real values, more purchasing power. That there is often more money in the less than in the greater number of dollars, everybody knows. If I had a hundred dollars in gold in my pocket and should offer it to the candidate for Governor of the Greenback party for one hundred and three dollars in greenbacks, I imagine that, at the present market rates, I should have no difficulty in effecting the exchange. He would be compelled to admit that there is the most money in the fewer dollars. Again, the gold paid out in redeeming paper would pass into circulation, there being now little motive to use it, except for legitimate business. Being a full equivalent for the greenbacks redeemed by it, it would fill the vacuum created by their withdrawal, and thus of itself prevent contraction. No doubt considerable accumulations of coin would be necessary in preparation for resumption, even under a plan like this; but I believe much less would be required than under any other system. The fact that the appreciation in the value of the paper currency would be so gradual, and that its rate would be so fully determined and known beforehand, would go very far towards removing both the inducements and the opportunities for speculators in gold, and would leave the precious metals, for the most part, to move freely in the channels of trade, under the law of its natural laws.

Some plan like this, for the resumption of specie payments, would have been as I would still be my preference. But Congress has never seemed to be favorably disposed toward it, and hence I have been willing to co-operate with others in supporting any plan which gave fair promise of accomplishing the result without injury to the business of the country. It is said that the Secretary of the Treasury is making an earnest effort to prepare for resumption in

1879, by safe and efficient measures, provided for, in his judgment, under existing law. What the details of these measures are we are not yet informed, but I believe we can trust him. He has ability, long experience, sound discretion and intimate knowledge of our finances and of the wants of the people. We must sustain and encourage him in the good work, and not allow him to be disheartened by any unintelligent clamor which may be raised against him.

I may add, that as an aid to specie resumption, as well as for other reasons, I am in favor of the remonetization of the silver dollar. I am in favor of restoring it to the place which it held in our financial system before the year 1873, without abatement of its powers and dignities—with “its arms and trophies streaming in their original lustre.” As the result of reading and reflection which have, at least, been animated by a desire to know the truth, I am convinced that silver will, as a rule, maintain its relative value to gold. I believe that in steadiness of value, it will not compare unfavorably with the other precious metal. During the last session of Congress, on the very day when the bill for the restoration of the silver dollar passed the House, a telegram from the city of New York was read, announcing that, on that day, silver bullion was at par with gold—that is, that an amount of uncoined silver, equal in weight and fineness to the old silver dollar, was worth as much—had as much purchasing power—in the market as the gold dollar. And yet a large portion of Europe had demonetized silver. Germany had recently done it, and was putting her silver coin for sale on all the markets of the world; and our own country had repudiated the silver dollar as a legal tender since the year 1873. I submit that a precious metal which maintains such vitality—such buoyancy of value—under all these grievous disadvantages is worthy to be trusted—is worthy to be sent forth as a companion of gold to aid in restoring

confidence and reviving business. That great authority upon the precious metals, Cernuschi, was right when, in a paper read before the Social Science Congress, at Liverpool, in 1876, after giving some statistics of production, he says:

"In view of these figures it is altogether impossible, even for those who have been so much afraid of the fertility of silver mines, to attribute the depreciation of silver to natural causes—it is wholly and exclusively due to the action of legislators."

It has recently become evident that there is no danger of any great over-production of silver in the mines of our country. I have a suspicion that the yield of silver mines may be, at times, more capricious than that of gold mines. There are points in history where we suddenly hear of their yielding immensely, and afterwards of their being as suddenly exhausted. But the disturbance arising from this excess or deficiency of production, has been local and temporary, and has not materially changed, for long periods, the relative value of gold and silver. With such steadiness of value in silver, with such need of its aid as the near prospect of specie resumption brings, and with such large production from our own mines at our very doors, it is unreasonable to ask us that we shall not utilize silver as money. I believe it would be perfectly safe, and it would certainly be most useful, to recoin the silver dollar, in company with gold coins, as rapidly as the facilities of our mints will permit.

I admit there is something seductive in the idea of the single standard; its unity and simplicity are attractive to the mind. It may also be admitted that the relative value of gold and silver cannot be so fixed, that it will, as a rule, exactly correspond to the fact. But I believe it may be made sufficiently exact to prevent any serious injury to business. And here comes in another consideration, which is of the greatest importance in connection with this subject.

Two eminent advocates of the double standard, Wolowski and Courcille-Senueil, strongly urge—and in this they are followed by Jevons, though himself a friend of the single standard—that where two standards exist there is a corrective compensatory action by which each prevents excessive appreciation or depreciation in the value of the other. I quote the words of Jevons: "At any moment, the standard of value is doubtless one metal or the other, and not both; yet the fact that there is an alternation tends to make each vary much less than it would otherwise do. It cannot prevent both metals from falling or rising in value, compared with other commodities, but it can throw variations of supply and demand over a larger area, instead of leaving each metal to be affected by its own accidents. Imagine two reservoirs of water, each subject to independent variations of supply and demand. In the absence of any connecting pipe, the level of water in each reservoir will be subject to its own fluctuations only. But if we open a connection, the water in both will assume a certain mean level, and the effects of any excessive supply or demand will be distributed over the whole area of both reservoirs."

He applies this illustration by saying, in substance, that the whole mass of the metals, gold and silver, is exactly represented by the water in these two reservoirs, and the connecting pipe is the law which enables one metal at any time to take the place of the other, as a legal tender.

Wolowski, with good reason, as it would seem, warns the commercial nations against the serious evils which will result from the general abolition of the double standard. He affirms that should the demonetization of silver be continued, the compensatory action, which Jevons so well describes, will be suspended, and that as a consequence of the general disuse of one of the precious metals, there will follow a rise in the

value of gold so disastrous as to involve the whole business world in embarrassment. I ask thoughtful men whether it is safe longer to continue an experiment—for an experiment it is—which is so fraught with danger to the common prosperity?

3. Again, the Nation wants Reform in the Civil Service. The utterance of these words may produce a smile—they have so often been used without serious meaning, or with a meaning that perverts their proper sense. Those in office have used them as meaning that present incumbents should not be removed; those out of office, as meaning that numerous vacancies ought to be made in order to accommodate those who have not yet "had a chance." Parties have often inserted these words in their platforms as a goodish phrase which it was hoped might win the favor of thoughtful and conscientious men. Republicans often talk of Civil Service Reform as meaning that Democrats should be turned out of place and Republicans put in. Democrats use the term in a sense precisely the reverse of this. Many persons tell me that no party can long maintain itself—that no President can maintain himself—without using official appointments as rewards for zealous supporters. It is said that President Hayes "will not hold out," that he will soon find it necessary to modify the policy on this question, with which he has commenced his administration. We see, then, what obstacles there are in the public mind, in the way of a fair hearing for this subject. My own opinion is, that President Hayes is in earnest in this policy, and that he will maintain it. The Cincinnati *Commercial* reports him as having said of this reform, after he was nominated and before he was elected:

"The trouble is not in any lack of promises on this question. Both parties have promised fairly enough. The Republicans promised fairly enough four years ago. The trouble is we haven't

kept our promises. The thing to do now is to make our promises in earnest, and to keep them as fully as we make them."

This is not the language of a President who would fail in the maintenance of principles which he has solemnly avowed, both in his letter of acceptance and in his inaugural address. Of course, the country would not accept any professed system of reform which should merely substitute one species of favoritism for another—which should only withdraw patronage from one set of men to whom it could not be safely entrusted, to confer it, in the end, upon another set of men, equally frail and equally exposed to temptation. To such a delusive system of reform, I believe that the President will not lend his countenance.

In saying that the Nation needs Reform in its Civil Service, I must not be understood as expressing my agreement with those journals which affirm that this branch of the service is, as a whole, corrupt and inefficient. For a number of years past, I have been a somewhat close observer of our Civil Service, both at home and abroad. It has many defects—quite enough to justify earnest efforts at improvement. It ought to be more efficient, more economical and, above all, more systematic than it is. There are some instances of dishonesty and embezzlement, and still more of laxity and want of strict uprightness. But the great body of our officials are faithful to their trust, and are diligent and successful in the discharge of their duties. Many of them are men of great merit and capacity for business. On the whole, it must be admitted that the government has been fairly served. Had this not been the case, it could not have been brought safely through some of the terrible ordeals to which it has been subjected. But this is not enough. It should not satisfy us that our Civil Service is passably good. It should be our honorable ambition to weed out of

it all incapacity, all dishonesty, and make it, if possible, the best in the world.

Civil offices may be divided into two kinds; those which are elective and those which are filled by Executive appointment. The former are filled for terms, the length of which is determined by the supposed necessity for more or less frequent review of the officer's official conduct by the people. In order to have a more conservative and permanent body of legislators, Senators of the United States are elected for the long period of six years. Members of the House of Representatives, who are intended to reflect the present wishes and opinions of the people, are, very properly, elected every two years. In some of the States many officers, for what are believed to be good reasons, are elected annually. As regards the whole class of elective offices, it may be sufficient to say that the work of raising the standard of moral and intellectual qualifications, is committed to the great body of electors, aided by candid and thorough discussion in the press and upon the platform. To that tribunal this portion of the needed reform may be hopefully entrusted.

But what is meant by Reform in the Civil Service as applied to the offices which are filled solely by Executive appointment? Without entering upon tedious and, as yet, unsettled details, we may answer in general, in the language of President Hayes, that reform in this department means that the affairs of the government should be managed as "a prudent merchant manages his business." This may be summed up in two maxims--first, fill the various offices with the best men you can get for the money; and second, retain them as long as they maintain that character. Why should not the business of the government be conducted upon these principles? Why should not the public interests be provided for with as much care as those of a bank, a factory, or a store?

Such a system would relieve the Civil Service from the effects of blundering ignorance; it would, to a large extent, prevent embezzlement, fraud and bribery; and, as it would reduce the number of officials in proportion to their increased efficiency, it would save a large amount of money to the Nation in salaries. Officials of the New York Custom House, who would not be likely to exaggerate the evils of its administration, recently testified before an investigating committee appointed by the Secretary of the Treasury to inquire into its condition, that twenty-five per cent. of the clerks of that great establishment could be dispensed with, if the appointments could all be made upon sound business principles. They testified that a large number of unnecessary clerks were kept upon the rolls and paid, in order to gratify prominent men. These superfluous clerks cost the Nation hundreds of thousands of dollars. Why should the great body of the tax-payers be asked to bear a burden like this? It is said that the new system of reform gives no opportunity to recognize men who have done honest work for the party. This is not altogether true. There is certainly no objection to a man who has been the warm friend of the party, and has striven to promote its interests by upright measures, provided he is, in other respects, the man that is required for the place. No doubt the party in power will often find it to be the right, as well as the graceful thing, to give places to men who have shown ardent attachment to its principles. But a proper system would, no doubt, forbid the appointment of a man merely because he had been a worker for the party, when a better man could be obtained for the service. The supreme end is the purity and efficiency of the service; but as in all free, and even in all parliamentary governments, the existence of parties has thus far proved to be both necessary and wholesome, these need not be ignored. In filling civil offices, honesty and ca-

pacity must be the first thing sought—must be indispensable; but, incidentally, and so far as is not inconsistent with this, men may be complimented with appointments who have shown a sincere devotion to the principles of the party, and have made sacrifices in its support.

A question which has been attended with no little difficulty is the appointment of Postmasters. The Constitution vests the appointing power for these officers in the Executive. But as the President and Postmaster-General can have no knowledge of the qualifications of candidates, who are hundreds and even thousands of miles distant, it has been the custom to take the advice of the member of Congress. But as he is liable to the temptation to recommend his personal friends without sufficient regard to their fitness—a temptation which he has not always been found strong enough to resist—the tendency of opinion at Washington, and in the country at large, is now in favor of consulting the wishes of the voters of the locality. It is argued that the judgment of the people will generally be more reliable than that of one man, especially if that man may be an interested party. It is not easy to reply to the argument which would make postoffices virtually elective. On the whole, there are no better or safer judges of the qualifications of a candidate for Postmaster than his neighbors, who get their mail at the same office with him. Why have not the citizens the same claim to be consulted about their Postmaster that they have to be consulted about their Mayor or their Magistrate? It is urged that if you make the office elective, many men who do little business, write few letters, or are even quite illiterate, may vote. This is no doubt true; but this, whether right or wrong, is part of our system of government. Are not those who are thought good enough to vote for President of the Nation, for Governor of the State, for Judge of our Su-

preme Court, and for Common Pleas Judge, also good enough to vote for a candidate for Postmaster? Why should he, more than others, be exempt from making his contest with the people, and succeeding or failing as he may happen to stand with them? Besides, the poor family, which makes its living by digging and washing, may have the same interest in having safely and promptly delivered the single letter which it receives during the quarter, informing it of the illness of a distant child, that the banker, or the manufacturer has in receiving his daily mail. The poor and uneducated send and receive few letters, but what correspondence they have is commonly of great importance to them.

It must be freely admitted that Reform in the Civil Service is a work which will be attended with difficulties, and which it will take time to accomplish. Some mistakes will be made, and some well-meant efforts will fail of success. Our honored President will find also that it requires more courage to carry out his policy in this respect than that in regard to the South. The Republican party is found mostly in the North, and many Northern Republicans will be more displeased by a policy which disappoints political aspirations in New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, than by one which does the same thing in South Carolina and Louisiana. A worthy Ohio Republican will find it easier to reconcile it to his sense of propriety that Packard and Chamberlain should go out of office than that he him-self should lose a postoffice or a consulate. The former calamity is remote and shadowy; the latter comes home to him with near and lively interest. Such is human nature; and there is a great deal of human nature this year. But, notwithstanding all these difficulties, the policy of the President will be persevered in. It will gradually become matured and systematized. It will gain steadily in the esteem and affection of the people, until, at last, no political party can hope to be

intrusted with the government unless honestly and fully committed to genuine Reform of the Civil Service.

4. I mention as a fourth great want of the Nation the education of the whole body of its citizens. It is universally admitted that free institutions can prosper only through the general intelligence of the people. In the light of this unquestioned truth consider the appalling facts disclosed by the last census, that nearly one-fourth of the legal voters of the United States cannot read or write, and that in one-half the country nearly one-half of the voters are in this deplorable condition of illiteracy. Pacification of the South, Reform in the Civil Service, Resumption of Specie Payments are, no doubt, all desirable; but any useful results which we may strive to accomplish through these will be imperfect and temporary so long as the more radical evil of ignorance is not reached and removed. So long as great masses of the people are not educated no cherished interest is safe. Though you may seem to be making good progress in the correction of abuses and in the institution of reforms, yet you can never say at what moment some blind and wild reaction may not break out, springing from ignorance and hurried on by selfish demagogues, which shall sweep away all the fair work of your hands. How can the current of the national life be purified when its very springs are poisoned? The greatest national object which can be presented to the mind of the patriot, at the present moment, is that there should be established in every neighborhood of the land a good common school, equally accessible to all, and a sufficient number of normal schools to prepare competent teachers for these. This great end all true men, all political parties, all philanthropic organizations, should strive to accomplish by every legitimate method. No doubt the principal part of this work must be done by the States, and, as citizens of States, we must ourselves be act-

ive, watchful and earnest in this cause. But the general government, too, has a responsibility. Congress has heretofore done much for the cause of education, in some directions, by grants of public lands. I rejoice in what it has done, but regret what it has left undone. Its duties to the people are not yet performed, and its constitutional powers are not yet exhausted. I look forward anxiously, but hopefully, for legislation systematic, comprehensive and liberal, to aid in securing the general education of the people. In one section of the Nation, Congress has conferred the right of suffrage upon nearly a million of men, most of whom cannot read or write, but has not yet done its share towards fitting them to discharge intelligently the duties of this high trust. Congress cannot derange, and should not attempt to derange, the just autonomy of the States. They are Sovereign over the question of education within their own borders. But Congress may offer to these States, for their voluntary acceptance, and upon safe conditions, a reasonable sum, either from the proceeds of the public lands or directly from the treasury, to aid in the general establishment of schools. Such offered assistance would, in my opinion, be received in the right spirit; and it is the more necessary, for the reason that these States came out of the late war so crippled in their resources that it will be nearly impossible for them, for many years, to assume the burden of establishing a complete system of education. To obviate all cause of complaint, and to give to the plan the dignity and completeness which belong to a principle, Congress might divide among all the States the sum appropriated for common education upon the ratio of illiteracy. This would give but little to some States and a large amount to others, but it would place the money where it is demanded by the general welfare.

5. The last national want of which I shall speak is a negative one, but it is not less important on that account. The

Nation wants exemption from subsidies, in land or money, to corporations. I do not belong to that school of economists who hold that such subsidies are unconstitutional; and there may have been times when they were not only constitutional, but necessary and useful. But the time has at length come when the resources of the country should have rest from this exhaustive drain upon them. Enough has been done in this direction, and more than enough, when we remember the claims of more vital interests that have been almost wholly neglected. Especially is the Nation weary of bestowing grants of land upon railroads. The Commissioner of our General Land Office, in a report dated January 9, 1872, estimates the total amount of land included in grants to railroads, at more than two hundred millions of acres. As mineral lands are in part excepted in these grants, a small portion of them will revert to the Government, but not enough to diminish in any large degree this alarming aggregate. Now, two hundred millions of acres are more than 300,000 square miles, which is nearly one-tenth of the whole territory of the United States. We have thus paid tithes of all that we possess to these corporations. Nearly one-tenth of our whole acreage has been bestowed upon them, and as the line of these roads generally passes along valleys and river bottoms, it is evident that what we have given them has been of the best of our heritage. You will then agree with me that our liberality towards these objects has already passed all reasonable limits. Let it be continued, and an American who is seeking for a homestead will soon have difficulty in finding a good piece of land upon which to settle. Education is already crying out for aid which it cannot obtain. The time has come when railroads, like other business enterprises, should stand or fall upon their own merits. Let the business of railroads be conducted upon sound and healthy

principles, without artificial stimulus, and let the public domain be reserved for actual settlers, and for the education of their children and the children of the American people.

I have thus imperfectly presented what appear to me to be, at the present time, the most pressing and important wants of the Nation. Perhaps others in speaking upon the same general theme, would have made a somewhat different selection of topics. But I will venture to say that no thoughtful man could address you upon what he should consider the imperative needs of the country without treating of several of those which I have discussed. They are certainly questions about which all men are thinking, talking and writing. It would be unreasonable to suppose that I had carried your sympathies and convictions with me on all points, but I would gladly hope that I had done this in the main. If this is so, I know that I shall not in vain invoke your co-operation with all those who love and support sound principles, in the advocacy and establishment of such principles in the land. Correct political doctrines need to fall back more and more for support upon thinking and educated men. Especially must the friends of good government look to young men, who are about to take their places in business and in the professions, to commit themselves early to sound political opinions, and to support them through life. For you the question, what is true, is every way more important than the question what will, at the moment, be received with favor. Devotion to truth not only brings self-respect and peace of mind, but, in the end, it even brings, better than anything else does, the lower rewards of worldly honor and prosperity. For it is true here, as in regard to a still higher and more sacred interest, that whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life, for conscience' sake, the same shall save it. The honest and true heart God knows and rewards from the beginning and always. In time, man also will recognize and honor it.



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